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ABSTRACT

Findings regarding white students, faculty, and administrators on the black college campus are reviewed. Studies indicate that the typical white student at a traditionally black campus in the South is a native of the Southern region, 27-30 years old, and likely to be married. The student has both pleasant and unpleasant experiences related to problems of adjustment and acceptance, and usually has not sought special help. White students often attend the black college primarily to get an education and not to participate in social or extracurricular activities. The most comprehensive profile of the white faculty on the black campus has been drawn by Paul Decker (1955), who investigated 20 colleges in 10 states. Principal findings include the following: 40 percent had no particular reason for working in a black college; 20 percent were working because of an interest in race relations; teachers did not think of their students in terms of race any more than do other teachers; relationships with students were close and rewarding; 95 percent of the white teachers claimed good rapport with their black colleagues; and 64 percent lived in a black community. Findings of a survey of white administrators at several public and private historically black institutions included the following: 53 percent of the administrators stated that their institution actively recruited white students; white students' chief adjustment problem after enrollment was their reluctance to express opinions freely in front of black classmates and black professors; and 59 percent of the administrators felt their campuses did not need a special orientation program solely for white students. (SW)

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The White Presence on The Black Campus

CHARLES I. BROWN

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COOPERATIVE PROJECT

This paper has been identified by a joint project of The Institute on Desegregation at North Carolina Central University and ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education at George Washington University. The purposes of this project are to identify, collect, and make available literature concerned with

(1) the problems of minority students in higher education in general and
(2) the problems of desegregation in historically black colleges and universities in particular.

New published and unpublished materials are reviewed and recommended by participants of the Institute on Desegratation's Interinstitutional Research Group (ID/IRG) for acquisition by ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education. An annual bibliography of this material will be published under the names of ERIC and the Institute.

Various types of materials are being solicited, especially unpublished and unindexed materials, as well as publications, produced by faculty and staff members. Included in these may be unpublished faculty studies, institutional research studies, master's theses, monographs, papers presented at professional meetings, articles from general and scholarly periodicals, and conference and workshop proceedings not covered by ERIC Clearinghouse on Higher Education.

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NORTH CAROLINA CENTRAL UNIVERSITY IS A CONSTITUENT INSTITUTION OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

THE WHITE PRESENCE ON THE BLACK CAMPUS:

Some Questions and Answers

A paper presented by Charles I. Brown
Associate Professor of Education,
Fayetteville State University, Fayetteville, N. C.
at the Third National Conference of The National
Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education,
April 29, 1978, Washington, D. C.

Every since my acceptance of this very privileged assignment to share with you some research findings relative to the white presence on the black campus, I have been torn between two main ideas that I might use as a lead-in to my presentation. One very much thought about idea was socio-political in nature. If I had chosen to use this approach I would have asked you to make a quick mental comparison of higher education in a socio-political context of the two previous Republican administrations and the higher education socio-political posture as taken by the current Carter/Democratic administration. In elaboration of this thought, all sorts of ideas came to mind as to how I might point out that a much more diligent Department of Health, Education and Welfare looming large in the background with its sheaths of mandates, directives and monitioring procedures makes for a much less moribund socio-political picture today in higher education than in recent yesteryears. If this tact had been followed in greater detail I would have applauded in wordier terms the prodding and agitating efforts of organizations such as the National Association for Equal Opportunity In Higher Education, the Legal Defende Fund of the NAACP. and the more than a score of other organizations of similar stripe and purpose, for their considerable contributions towards heightening the legal and moral consciousness of the nation and by so doing has lended to the alleviation of some of the worst of the socio-political abuses foisted upon higher education of both yesteryear and today.

But fortunately for you, a more detailed prefatory of this nature was abandoned when it was realized that this line of reasoning would lead to brambles that would not only sorely tax my layman's knowledge of sociology and political science, but also because this approach would inevitably lead to a question that is in the back of everyone's mind, "Can we, in the light of certain socio-political realities, have our cake and eat it too?" A

question that I am in no way prepared to answer--at least momentarily.

The second main idea that I more than toyed with as a lead-in to this presentation was the sympathetic ploy. Implementation of the symapthetic ploy would have me point out that my co-panelist is but one of a veritable legion of researchers inquiring into the status, problems and impact of the black presence on the white campus. Maximization of the have-some-pity-on-me role would have me make the plaint, "That if they know more about the black presence on the white campus than we do about the white presence on the black campus, then its because they're bigger than we are. --To cite but one example of what I am trying to get over her, I am associated with the Institute on Desegregation. a North Carolina Central University based research outfit. The Institute is made up of 8 schools and a fluctuating membership of 20-30 researchers, and if you haven't already guessed what the punch-line of this story is, an overwhelming majority of the topics that have either already been investigated, or those currently under investigation, or awaiting investigation are those dealing with the black presence on the white campus.

How's my sob story doing? --Well, no matter, because albeit younger in the number of years that the white presence on the black campus has been a prime research topic, that the topic is still less in vogue, and a fewer in number of investigators, white presence on the black campus researchers are a lot that is not only stubbornly persisted in its aims but one that is also gaining in investigative skills in the acquistion of knowledge about the white student, white faculty, and white administrators on the black campus.

Of these several components, momentarily, and in diminutive order, much more is known about the white student on the black campus than is known about

the white faculty, in like manner, more is known presently about the white faculty than is known about the white administrator on the black campus.

White Student Profile

Beginning with the white student presence, we have found the following to typical of the white student on a traditionally black campus in the south.

He (or she) is a native of the southern region, between 27 and 30 years olds, and likely to be married. He has either not sought the advice of his family and friends in deciding to enroll in a black college, and, although deeply concerned about the nature of his experience, academic and social, and also about his physical safety, relatives and friends have made no strong efforts to influence his decision.

The student has had pleasant and unpleasant experiences related to problems of adjustment and acceptance, but has not sought special help. He prefers to work through any difficulty by relying upon his own determination, self-confidence and maturity.

The white student arrives at the traditionally black campus with goals firmly fixed and immediately establishes the impression on fellow students and faculty that he has enrolled primarily to achieve these goals. Dependent upon limited family resources and his own savings, his decision to enroll at the black institution is based upon sound economic judgement. Expenses at the college are relatively low, and its location makes daily commuting convenient. He has no plans to become involved in activities, and the quality of the facilities and the faculty does not need to be questioned. These factors have helped him overcome or mimimize many of the reservations he has nurtured previously concerning the black college and university.

In the main, the just read profile of the white student on the black campus has gone relatively unchanged since it was first drawn in 1972 by Brown and Phyllis Stein in 1972, and by Brown again in 1973. Since then the profile has found corroboration in the work of Ada Elam and Ida Stevens, John Baker, et al and in a soon to be released 5-year two-volume study by the Institute for Services to Education, Inc.

Elam (1978) reports that in a Maryland study of racial integration among that state's colleges, some white students made their choice of a predominantly black college for philosophical reasons. Some were interested

in experiencing a minority status. Others were interested in fulfilling the objective of racial understanding. Yet others had a desire to appear unprejudiced or wished to attract attention to themselves.

While studying the beliefs of white students concerning housing and student activities, Ida Stevens (1976) also found that white students attended the black college primarily to get an education, i.e., that they had a very serious attitude toward their education and apparently were not there to participate in social or extra-curricular activities.

In a more psychological and perceptual vein, Brown and Walker (1976) inquired of white and black students at Fayetteville State University and Methodist College whether they thought the character, mission and outlook of the college they attended would change if the racial composition of the student body adhered more closely to the racial mix of the geographical area in which the institutions were located. --Briefly put, the answer was an overwhelming NO.

In yet another college perception study, John Baker (1976) and colleagues found: (1) that white students on selected black campuses in Alabama perceived campus morale to be higher than did black students on the same campuses; and (2) white students on black campuses ranked teaching quality significantly higher than did blacks on the same campuses.

As intimated earlier, my guess is that the best of the psychological studies, Behavior Growth in Rapidly Changing Institutions by researchers at ISE is on the way. With this two-volume study in hand, the profile of the white student on the black campus will be fleshed out even more.

White Faculty Profile

Over and beyond the statistical type studies most notably done by the

Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Southern Regional Education Board, the Office of Civil Rights of the United States Office of Education and the fast-descriptive type studies released in the bulletins of the Office of Advancement of Public Negro Colleges, the most comprehensive profile of the white faculty on the black campus has been drawn by Paul Decker (1955) of Bethune-Cookman College. --Decker distributed 147 questionnaire to white teachers in black colleges, 54 usable questionnaires were returned from twenty colleges in ten states. In addition to the disclosure of certain personal factors, the questionnaire also sought to examine the reasons whites opt to teach at black colleges, the social relationships of the white teachers on the black campus, and to solicit their opinions concerning contemporary problems in black/white relationships.

Principal Findings

- Forty percent had no particular reason for working in a black college; 20% were working because of an interest in race relations; 6% had been appointed to their jobs; another 6% mentioned missionary type motives; 8% were convinced that exceptional personal and professional opportunities were present.

- Median number of years residence in the south was six; average number of years having taught in a black college was 2.5; and about 75% had taught formerly in white schools.

- Relative to teacher-student relationships, three main points emerged:

  1. Teachers do not think of their students as Negro students any more than teachers in other colleges think of their students as white students. Any relationship which exists, has nothing whatever to do with color.

  2. Relationships with students are "particularly close and rewarding."

  3. Teachers on the whole realize that Negro students come to college with poor academic preparation. Great patience must be the keyword.

- Ninety-five percent of the white teachers claimed "good rapport" with their black colleagues." "Good rapport" was seemingly established purely on the bases of personalities and interests.

- Sixty-four percent live in a black community, 36% in white communities.
- Thirty percent of the white teachers attend a black church regularly, 12% attend sometimes, another 12% attend an interracial church.
- Twenty-eight percent reported the reaction of friends, relatives, neighbors to working in a black college bordered on enthusiasm; 15% said the situation had been "accepted"; 12% were apprehensive.

In rounding out the white faculty profile, Elam (1978) reports one ISE finding that straddles both the white student and white faculty sectors, that white students at Bowie felt that the presence of white faculty on campus served as a sort of signal of their own acceptance by the college in addition to the creation of an environment which was more comfortable to them.

White Administrators Profile

In our several studies of the presence on the black campus this assignment brought home to me, as nothing had ever before, that we know about as close to nothing about the white administrator on the black campus as one can get. I would hazard the guess that researchers into the white presence began and have evidently continued to concentrate their efforts on first the largest and most visible segment the students and have yet to reach the samllest and least visible segment--those whites who serve in administrative capacities on the black campus.

A 12-item questiornaire was distributed to administrator at the several public and private historically black institutions, the first three question inquired about enrollment, the number and percent of white and black students, and the extent of change "percentage wise" of white and black students over a ten year period. Subtabulations of the remaining questions disclosed that

- Fifty-three percent of the administrators stated that their institution actively recruited white students.

- Administrators noted that the concerns most frequently expressed were social in nature, e.g., wondered about their acceptance by black students, feared being ostracized by white peers, family, community, etc. Interestingly enough social concerns were mentioned almost twice as often as was the second ranking concern --that which dealt with the quality of the institutions academic programs.

- The administrators further noted that family, friends, high school officials, and church officials were co-equal in the expression of their concern over the correctness of the students decision to attend a predominantly black institution.

- According to the administrators, white students' chief adjustment problem after enrollment was their reluctance to express their opinions freely in front of black classmates and black professors. Exclusion from non-academic activities and co-curricular activities were also viewed as difficulties.

- Fifty-nine percent of the administrators felt their campuses did not need a special orientation program solely for white students. They felt that all students faced similar problems of adjustment to the college and/or university environment. On campuses where such provisions did exist, the efforts ranged from indivivual counseling by faculty members to Crisis Clinic Encounter Sessions.

Some Still Unanswered Questions

In concluding this presentation, in addition to a bevy of questions asked by ISE that you may find on pages 11-13 of the white presence background materials that some of you may have, is a coterie of questions that should/must be asked about the white administrator on the black campus. I, for one, am in hopes that when a fuller assessment of the white administrator in our now-more-than-ever-before equal opportunity employment institutions, has been completed ~~it~~ IT will be found that instead of being the harbingers of "take-over" that the white administrator brought skills to the black campus that were in short supply, that they eased the passage to the influential, and that they helped to lossen the pursestrings of governmental and philanthropic coffers.

Questions of a similar nature may also be put about the faculty, for in truth, it has been my experience, and the experience of all the white presence researchers to whom I have talked and whose studies I have read, that any inquiry into the white presence on the black campus generally winds up raising more questions than it answers. I suppose that this condition or situation can be likened to the age-old adage that with each step taken down the road or higher rung on the ladder successfully mounted that we can see further down the horizon. The analogy here is plain, that with each fact uncovered about the white presence on the black presence another question looms into view and it in its turn and time must be answered.

Problems in white still confronts historically black institutions and my own assessment is that albeit things are not as bright as they should be/ the outlook for black institutions is not as bleak or as fear-struck as it once was. But whatever the case, if no problems or feard existed at all, as equal-opportunity employing agencies committed to the deliverance of full-service to the several communities of origin, white students, faculty, and administrators are a fact of life, are in our schools, and decision-making would be enhanced if we maintained a vigilence on questions such as the feelings and experiences of both black and white students where reverse integration is occuring at an ever quickening pace? Will the white presence improve the lot of the traditionally black institutions academically and financially? What long-range effects will the white experience have on the lives and careers of the participants in this educational and racial amalgam? Does this new phenomenon we are witnessing and participating in presage an expansion or diminiution of opportunities for blacks in higher education? and lastly. What can each of us as individuals do to make the white presence a benefit to the black campus?